

The movement of water has carved the way for rivers and creeks and shaped the land for many years. The channels of water become very prominent as the tide recedes. The shoreline in this landscape is either sheltered by 6.5 feet of water over the normal level, or exposed by a drop of 1.2 feet below normal level.

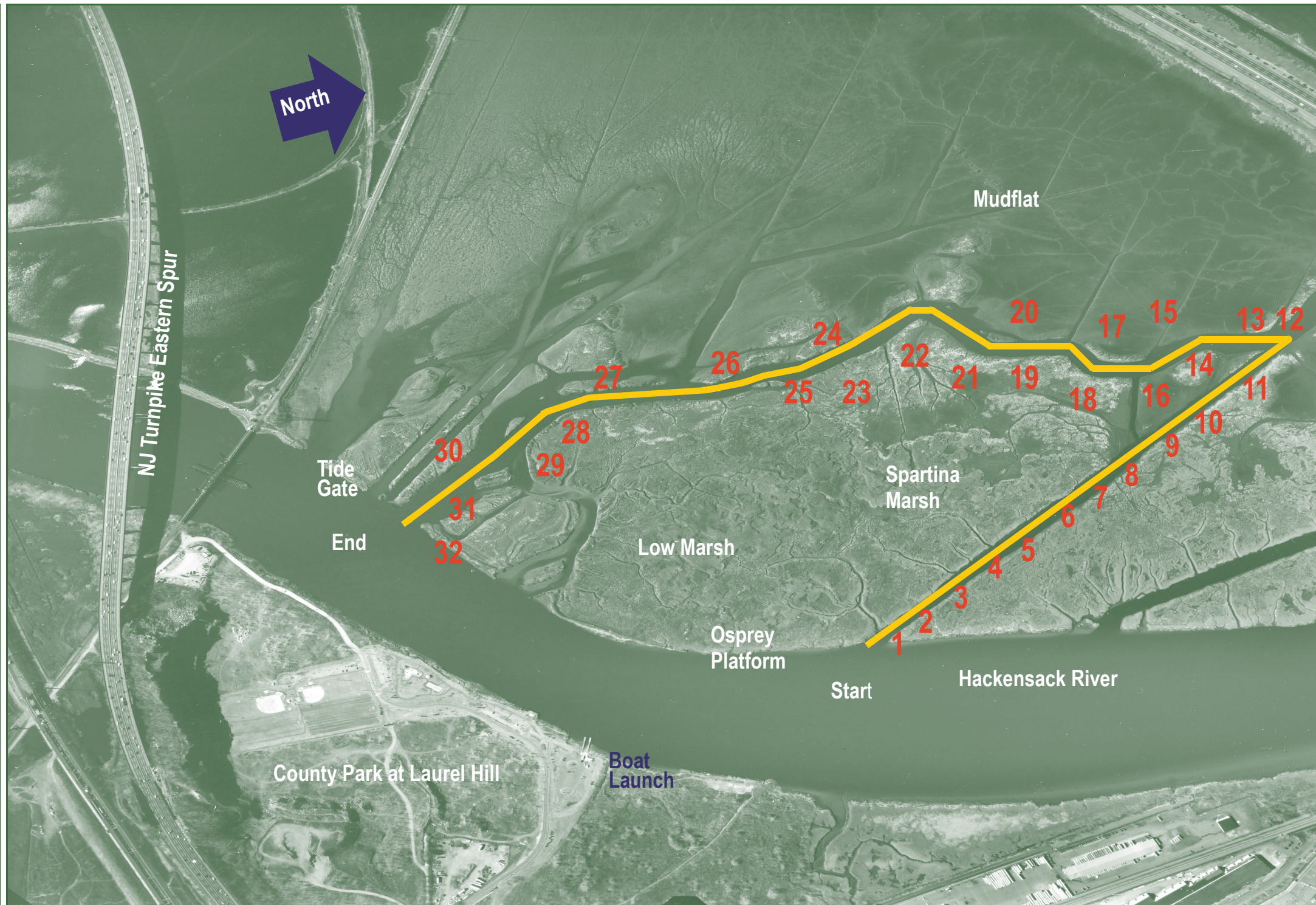
#### **Low tide:**

The salt marsh is made up of large, muddy expanses, mostly devoid of vegetation. At low tide we call these mud flats.

This soggy soil is home for many: algae and other small plants grow on top; this entices a host of animals that feed on the flats. Shorebirds, like sandpipers and plovers, probe the mud with their long beaks. Diamond-back terrapins bask in the sun along the exposed creek banks. Fiddler crabs, as well as their burrows are visible as well.

#### **High Tide:**

The water at high tide seems to almost swallow the vegetation. One can imagine the rush of activity just below the water's surface. Microscopic plants and animals float with the tides and give the water a pea green color. Small shrimp and fish can be seen jumping out of the water near the shallow channel edges. Ducks can be spotted paddling through the water and dabbling or diving for food. Cormorants perch on structures that stick out of the water and dry their feathers before diving under again.







Please do not throw away this Canoe Guide. Be kind to the earth. Keep it for future reference, or pass it on. Thank you.

#### Governor

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Susan Bass Levin

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**This trail is recommended  
for experienced canoeists**

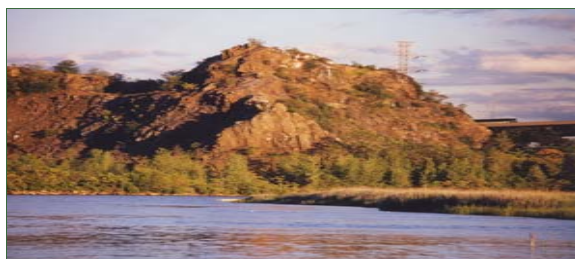
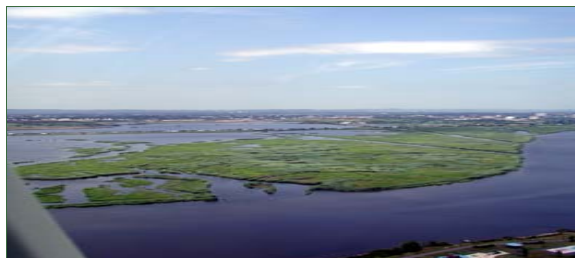


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Meadowlands Commission**

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## Saw Mill Creek CANOE TRAIL



**New Jersey  
Meadowlands Commission**

### Sawmill Creek Canoe Trail

(approx. 2 ½ miles long)

Sawmill Wildlife Management Area is accessible from Hudson County Laurel Hill Park in Secaucus.

The Saw Mill Creek Wildlife Management Area was established by The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1973. It is roughly 750 acres and is part of the larger Sawmill Tidal Basin which extends over 1,000 acres on either side of the New Jersey Turnpike in Lyndhurst and Kearny.

The Sawmill Basin is a brackish tidal marsh, or estuary. This is where the fresh water from the Hackensack River meets the salt water from the Atlantic Ocean. It is an exciting and dynamic ecosystem and a great place to explore. The best way to explore is by canoe...

#### Before you begin:

**Bring along a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (PFD), a paddle, a buddy and a whistle.**

**We also recommend bringing water, bug spray, sunscreen and binoculars.**

#### Be aware of the tides

At high tide the shoreline is covered by 6 1/2 of water. At low tide mudflats are exposed. The water channels will vary depending upon the flow of the tide. If the tide is going out, the channels will be narrow. If the tide is coming in, the channels will be broad.

High and low tides occur at roughly 12 hour intervals. Peak high is roughly 6 hours before peak low.

For daily tide information see: [www.tides.com](http://www.tides.com)  
Region: Mid-Atlantic, Port: Hackensack River

Waterfowl hunting in the Saw Mill Creek Wildlife Management Area is permitted during the hunting season. Contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for more information.

**This trail is suitable for experienced canoeists - strong tides, boat traffic and hunters may be encountered.**

### Highlights along the canoe trail

Launch your canoe at the Laurel Hill Park boat ramp. Paddle across the river and to the right and look for trail marker #1. Follow the numbers to explore:

#### Laurel Hill:

Laurel Hill is a remarkable natural and cultural historic site. Native Americans called this spectacular rock outcropping Snake Hill for the black water snakes that were said to have blanketed its shores. Dutch settlers eradicated the snakes. The geology of Snake Hill provides evidence that volcanoes once existed in this region. The Palisades may have been the source of magma that formed Snake Hill. The rock was eroded over centuries by glacial activity, and more recently, by human activity. The site was quarried for much of the past century, resulting in the landscape we see today.

#### Canoe Trail Marker #1 & #32:

The tide gates that are still visible at these locations were built by the Mosquito Extermination Commission around 1912. This was part of a sustained effort to rid the area of mosquitoes, which were known to carry malaria. It was thought that if the wetlands were drained, the mosquitoes would have no place to breed. Instead, diking and dredging left stagnant pools which nurtured even greater numbers of mosquitoes.

In 1950, a severe hurricane struck northeast New Jersey and New York with sufficient force to break through the large wooden tide gates. The tide flowed once again over these 750 acres, allowing the marsh the chance to rebuild itself.

#### Canoe Trail Markers #14 - #27:

At high tide, the area looks like a broad lake, but at low tide it is an exposed mudflat with little standing water. Wildlife is best observed at a low tide. As you enter the creeks, look on the banks for mud crabs, fiddler crabs, and diamond back terrapins. Wading birds may be seen feeding throughout the mudflats. These include snowy egrets, great egrets, herons, plovers and sandpipers. In the water killifish, silversides, and grass shrimp are numerous.